

We claim:

1. An absorbent article having a body-facing side and an exterior-facing side remote from the body-facing side, the article comprising a backsheet, a liquid permeable topsheet attached to the backsheet, and an absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and the backsheet, the absorbent core comprising a molded fibrous web with a basis weight of at least 50 grams per square meter comprising cellulosic fibers and at least 1% by weight of binder material, the fibrous web being molded to define a resilient central longitudinal hump with a length of at least 6 cm and a width of at least 1.5 cm, the central longitudinal hump being surrounded by at least one recessed elongated ring, the fibrous web further comprising a plurality of flexure zones longitudinally remote from the central longitudinal hump, each flexure zone comprising a recessed zone adjacent a molded transverse elevated zone, the fibrous web further having a Surface Height of at least 2 mm.
2. The article of Claim 1, wherein the fibrous web has an Overall Surface Depth of at least 2 mm.
3. The article of Claim 1, wherein the fibrous web has a Surface Height of at least 3 mm.
4. The article of Claim 1, wherein the fibrous web has a Surface Height of at least 5 mm.
5. The article of Claim 1, wherein the central longitudinal hump has a double arcuate transverse cross-section.
6. The article of Claim 1 or 5, wherein the central longitudinal hump has a double arcuate longitudinal cross-section.
7. The article of Claim 1, wherein the recessed elongated ring has a density substantially the same as that of the central longitudinal hump.
8. The article of Claim 1, wherein the portion of the topsheet over the recessed elongated ring has a porosity and density substantially the same as that of the portion of the topsheet over the central longitudinal hump.

9. The article of Claim 1, wherein the fibrous web is an airlaid web.
10. The article of Claim 9, wherein the binder material comprises thermoplastic binder material.
- 5 11. The article of Claim 10, wherein the airlaid web comprises at least 5% by weight of thermoplastic binder fiber, and wherein the airlaid web has been thermally molded.
12. The article of Claim 11, wherein the airlaid web has been thermally molded by passing heated air through the airlaid web while in contact with a gas permeable molding surface.
- 10 13. The article of Claim 11, wherein the airlaid web has been thermally molded through the application of heat applied by at least one of microwaves and radiofrequency energy.
14. The article of Claim 11, wherein the airlaid web has been thermally molded through the application of heat applied by the action of ultrasonic waves.
- 15 15. The article of Claim 11, wherein the airlaid web has been thermally molded through the application of heat applied by conduction from at least one heated, three-dimensional surface.
16. The article of Claim 11, wherein the airlaid web has been thermally molded through the application of radiatively applied energy.
17. The article of Claim 10, wherein the binder fibers comprise sheath-core fibers.
- 20 18. The article of Claim 9, wherein the binder material comprises thermosetting material.
- 25 19. An absorbent article having a body-facing side and an exterior-facing side remote from the body-facing side, the article comprising a backsheet, a liquid permeable topsheet attached to the backsheet, and an absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and the backsheet, the absorbent core comprising a molded fibrous web with a basis weight of at least 50 grams per square meter comprising cellulosic fibers and at least 5% by weight of thermoplastic binder material, the fibrous web having been thermally molded with the topsheet in place such that the topsheet closely conforms to the body-facing surface of the fibrous web, the fibrous web

further having raised zones and recessed zones with an Overall Surface Depth of at least 2 mm.

20. An absorbent article having a longitudinal direction, a transverse direction, a vertical direction, a body-side surface and a garment-side surface, comprising a backsheet, a liquid pervious topsheet attached to the backsheet, and an absorbent core disposed between the topsheet and the backsheet, the absorbent core comprising a three-dimensional upper absorbent layer comprising a molded airlaid web comprising cellulosic fibers and water-resistant binder material to stabilize the fibers in a three-dimensional form; the body-side surface of the upper absorbent layer having a plurality of molded, elevated regions comprising a central elevated region elongated in the longitudinal direction, and the garment-side surface of the upper absorbent having a plurality of depressions corresponding to the elevated regions on the body-side surface of the upper absorbent layer, the depressions defining void spaces between the upper absorbent layer.